

Walker 1



COLLECTED PROJECTS

BY

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Table of Contents

Travel Poems – 2

Worker's Raps – 4

WHOA – 9

A Night with Crows –13

Travel Poems

A single pink cloud stretches in both directions all across an endless sky and I am reminded of you all.

Cold Fog

you're shivering in cold fog on the golden gate bridge and your mother is taking shelter after a tornado warning breaks in the houston area and your sister is filing paperwork behind her desk near the salem witch museum and all your best friends are at a halloween party playing you-themed drinking games.

and though this is the furthest you've been from your family and your car and your bed you realize that jumping didn't even cross your mind until you were three quarters of the way through your frigid journey and you saw someone drop their coffee over the edge.

and instead you put your hat in your backpack so the wind doesn't steal it from you and run with it down into the icy waves of the bay below.

Small Black Birds

Your voice to me sounds like a large flock of small black birds flying overhead (which if you don't know sounds like a gentle wave breaking on a beach where the warm sun is our only guest; or a soft rustle of our boots through dry leaves on the ground; or my dried out hands shifting in your soft palms; or a full sail filled with a steady breeze and a spirit of adventure--which if you think about it that is what a wing is--or if you still don't understand it sounds like the soft morning voice of your lover you haven't seen in a long time).

Walker 4

Seeing a fire from an airplane.

The wing largely blocked my view of the stereoscope of green and blue fields quickly sliding into a small city below us. As I watched tiny, model sized people in tiny, model sized cars travel along tiny, model sized streets, a plume of smoke slipped into frame.

My first thought was “I bet that’s bad for the environment.” Noxious fumes and greenhouses gases bellowing silently from a factory. The lingering flatulence of capitalism.

At some point though it became clear that the smoke was leaping from large portions of a building. I wondered why cars are still moving around. They seem too close to the fire from my viewpoint. I could see no sirens nor red fire trucks and I wanted to call 911 but my hand held electronic was on airplane mode as per FCC regulations.

When the red of the flames themselves enter my view, I tense slightly. I can see the whole of the structure now and it reminds me of my elementary school. I want to leap from my seat in the exit row and into the building to save a child or a grandma or maybe a small cat.

As the building passes under the wing my interest begins to disperse like the smoke that turns gradually from thick oily black into a soft though still menacing gray and finally spreads so thin it blends with the greens and blues of the ground below.

The Patty Winters Show

The Patty Winters show this morning was about Wall Street bigwigs coming face to face with the people they're extorting. One of the guests strangled a businessman in front of a live studio audience with his own plaid Armani tie and, to my surprise but not to my disagreement, the audience gave him a standing ovation.

Worker's Raps

by

Box Cutter Hero

[one day this might be a rap concept album about a person working in a department store.]

right away, great manager (windex slinger and box cutter hero)

Right away, Great Manager,
I'll go where you need me.
The banks of the parking lot
Or grill aisle pleading.

I've got sore feet
And even worse moods.
Put Lord Quas on pause
to sweep up bird shit and
Point out carpet cleaner to drunk bro dudes

I identify with Shinji Ikari
cuz we both suck at our jobs.

9 dollars is a sick pay
Most I've ever got.
Too bad that doesn't cover
College loans, car insurance, groceries
Or the knee pain from lifting this box.

I'm a box cutter hero
Slicing up clear tape
Slinging Windex and top notch mops
That lawn mower is worth the price
I can't tell you why but the Great Manager
He didn't have to think twice.

I quit smoking for two weeks
Just to piss in this cup.

Walker 6

Welch's Fruit Snacks

Fuck him and his manly whit
I'm pretty sure he's a skinhead
Shaved head and racist jokes,
Stacking produce by day,
Planning the fourth reich by night

Or the guy who generally is pretty cool
But gets high and mighty about his tattoos
"It's so hard to be judged by the way you look."
My black ass sits there like
"Welcome to weenie hut jr can I take your order?"

The only thing getting me through
These long days of stocking floor wax
this pack of Welch's Fruit Snacks

I'm talking Strawberry,
Mixed Fruit, and Berries 'n Cherries
Tangy fruit keeps me alive
From angry customers and angrier co workers
Just gotta break open the pack to those gummy sanctuaries

Yeah I'll look in the back,
Eat some fruit snacks drink a soda
Debate the Star Wars review
And then maybe I'll find your shampoo.

Walker 7

The Overnight Shift (a four-dimensional journey to madness)

It's eight pm and there's "major restocking needed."

Here for 9 hours, I regret not calling out

It was never clarified if I'm getting overtime,

Where this stuff goes I've got major doubt.

Joe has a blank stare on his face,

Jim is already talking to his boxes.

John points me toward the pesticides

Then starts talking about paradoxes

it's midnight and i think of two things

the fact that this rat poison almost smells good

and you

i wonder if you're sleeping well

i hope you're warm and safe

that you don't regret watching one more episode of roswell

this rat poison smells sweet like death.

or maybe you're out throwing back PBR

i hope you're with friends you can trust

and that your hangover isn't too bad

when you come in this morning.

i wonder if this stuff tastes good to rodents.

i hope that the last meal they eat is the best they've ever had.

It's 3am and I'm standing in the outdoor section. I've got a potted shrub in each hand. My eyes yearn to shut themselves. I yawn and the air tastes like lawn fertilizer which tastes like dog vomit. My feet don't even hurt anymore.

Then a pipe bursts and dumps gallons of water onto the floor and into my shoes. My feet become soggy. I run to find the manager, but he is already here. I pant, "That's not supposed to happen, right?" He smirks and condescends to me, "No. That's not supposed to happen." It's moments like this where I miss my weekend trip to Tralfamadore.

you find me at 6am i'm staring at the label of a bottle of rat poison the handy man is fixing the pipes you tap me on the shoulder "it's time to go" you say the sun is up now and i don't remember that happening i drive home with the sun resting in my rear view mirror.

Walker 8

A Single Moment

I'm staring at a boxed porch set
Chairs, table, umbrella and all
Strapped with plastic and cardboard
And shelved twenty or so feet in the air.
Not even in my department.

I need a fork lift but
The Great Manager is busy
So is Rick from Electronics
Bill who makes keys

And the overnight guys are
Sleeping nicely in what is left of their realities
(the pillow under their heads and their cardboard paper cuts)

"I'm really sorry with that wait,"
I say, pretending that I care about this more than
My paycheck, my lunch break, my fruit snacks

Then the customer who looks a little like Barry Goldwater
Cracks open his crusty old pale lips and with
Thunder, hate, self-righteous capitalism and \$999 on the line

He managed to crone out
"Yeah, you should be."

And it makes me feel like a madvillian, it makes me feel like I've been
mis-educated, it makes me feel like I need to speak plainly, it felt like I
was trapped in a dark comedy, like I am in need of a love supreme, that I
am the wretched of the earth, it felt that I have an acoustic soul, that I
was going to meet the man, that I was at the mountaintop, that
somewhere their eyes were watching God.

And I managed to crone out,
"What the fuck makes you think you can talk to me like that?"

Walker 9

Cleaning out the locker (feat. Conor Powers on keyboard)

E ♭

A ♭ ⁷

B ♭

E ♭

D

G

G

C

I cut up my apron

Grab my last fruit snacks

Turn in my name badge and
tape gun

You're sad to see me go

But glad I stood up

For me, for you

For minimum wage workers
everywhere

The manager, all great and short
Shakes my hand before he boots
me out.

Maybe I'll plant a garden,

Go back to school,

Start the revolution,

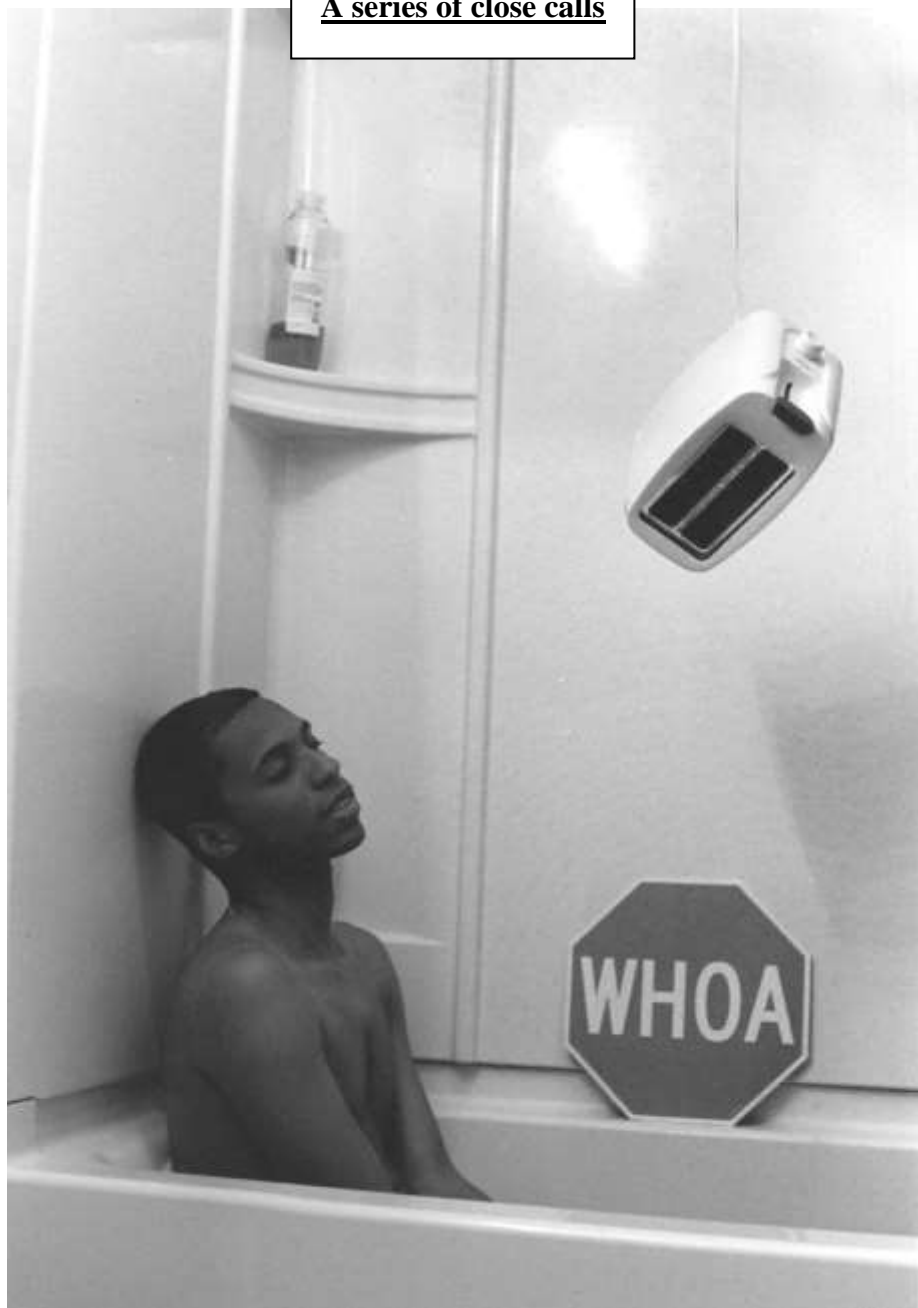
Or sit in my civic

And wonder if that great cosmic
critic

Really cares how I put this on
my resume.

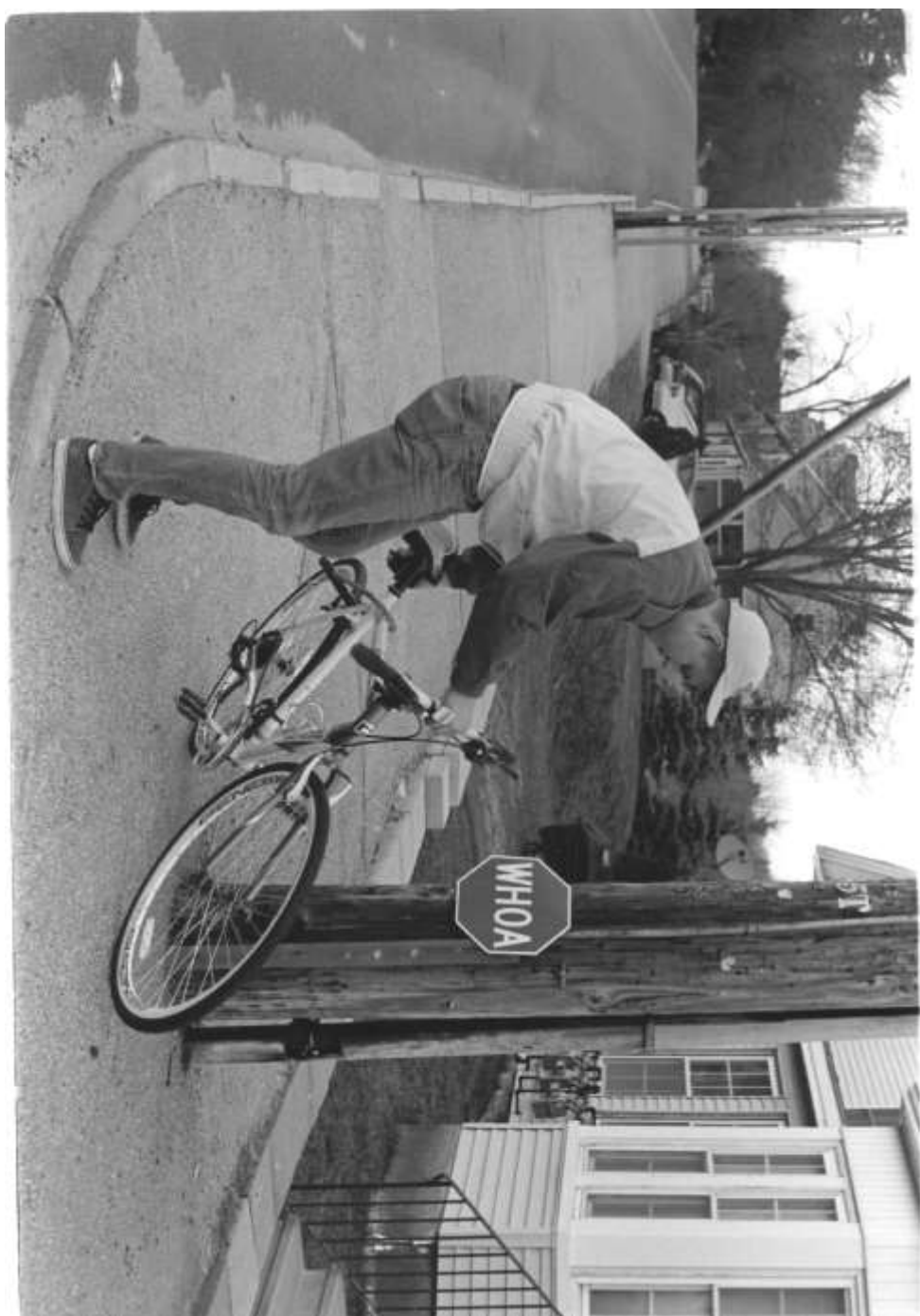
WHOA

A series of close calls





Walker 12



Walker 13



A Night with Crows

Shisui and Itachi Uchiha stood watching water rush down a waterfall. Shisui's eye bleed red tears. "Danzō has already stolen my Copy Wheel Eyes. Who knows what he's using them for." Shisui said. "It's up to you, Itachi. You have use the technique we've been developing."

Then Shisui succumbed to his wounds and fell into the waterfall.

Itachi walked numbly through the village to reach his home. As he entered the Village Hidden in the Leaves, a person wearing the painted mask of a dog approached him. The masked person handed Itachi a letter bearing Danzō Shimura's personal seal. "Lord Danzō is summoning you. Report immediately for briefing."

Itachi Uchiha asked, "What is this about?"

The courier said, "You think they'd tell me that?" before disappearing into a cloud of smoke.

Danzō Shimura, head of the Tactical Squad, sat at a table alone on a tall balcony. He wore bandages over his left eye and arm. "Thank you for joining me, Itachi. I trust I am not inconveniencing you."

The balcony on which they spoke looked over the village, with the carved images of the four Shadows of Fire close by on the horizon. Itachi's eyes followed the horizon until he saw the main gate leading into the Uchiha Clan's community. He accepted the offer of tea in silence. Itachi could tell based on the odor, color, and viscosity of the tea that it wasn't poisoned.

"I have brought you here to give you one command. You know that the Uchiha clan is planning to overtake the village; we have confirmation of their plotting. That makes them enemies of the village. Your mission is to destroy the Uchiha Clan. In its entirety."

Itachi gasped, "You cannot truly be commanding me to—"

"I am ordering you to do what is best for the village. We could send the rest of the Tactical Squad to put down the rebellion before it begins, but such open warfare would be seen as weak by foreign nations and could lead to outside threats. You must do it, but you may choose a survivor. Tell that one survivor you did it to test your power and challenge them to chase you."

"Wouldn't it also show weakness to be unable to defend your own people from one person doing harm on that scale? Whether it's

Walker 15

openly admitted or not, you would have blood on your hands Danzō.” A tear welled in Itachi’s eye and he paused his sentence. He held back the tear and continued. “No Danzō, I would have blood on my hands!”

Danzō’s expression pierced spears of disgust toward Itachi in response to his words. “You dare to question me? I am you commander. Follow your orders, Itachi Uchiha. You have 48 hours to complete your mission. You are dismissed.”

Itachi did not turn to leave. His voice was lower, though no calmer when he asked “And what would you do with the bodies when they’re gone? With all those Copy Wheel Eyes?”

Danzō stood from the table and two masked ninja appeared in puffs of smoke behind him; the one wearing a dog mask and the other wearing a bull mask. Danzō’s voice was harsh, “I said, you are dismissed, Itachi.”

When Itachi finally reached his home, he was greeted excitedly by his younger brother, Sasuke.

“Brother, can you help me practice that shuriken technique? I think I’m pretty good, but I could really use some pointers.”

Itachi poked Sasuke in the forehead gently and smiled, “Not today Sasuke, sorry.”

Fugaku Uchiha, leader of the Uchiha Clan, awaited his oldest son in the next room. When Itachi entered, the room was illuminated by what moonlight blew in with the breeze through an open window.

“So you’ve spoken with Danzō?” Fugaku asked.

Itachi replied, “Yes. I can spare Sasuke if I complete his plan to exterminate the clan.”

Fugaku’s expression showed surprise; not of preference nor horror. “Choose to align with your brethren and almost surely plunge the village into war; or betray your friends and family to ensure the survival of one of the ones you hold most dear. In the scenario where you side with Danzō, I could die knowing my two sons survived. Only a monster such as Danzō can cast that into the world, but maybe I too am a monster for what part I’ve had in it all. But now you see, if we could gain power we could combat Danzō and then this wouldn’t be a problem.”

Itachi again felt tears springing across his eyelids. He wiped them away. “But that doesn’t fix the issue, that just means someone else will come and do what Danzō is doing.”

Walker 16

“I trust you to make the correct decision, son. And I am sorry I have put you in this position, but it is all for the good of the village and the clan.”

Itachi sat atop the hill overlooking the Village Hidden in the Leaves. The sky was dark blue, and the village could be seen mostly through streetlamps and light escaping from open windows. Then Itachi could smell smoke and jumped to his feet. Shuriken in hand, he turned to see the leader of his village, the ninja known as the Third Shadow of Fire – Hiruzen Sarutobi.

“Hello, Itachi.” Hiruzen said, puffing away at a pipe. The smoke stunk like a burning skunk.

Itachi returned his blade to its holster at his waist but remained standing. “Hello, Lord Third. What brings you here this time of evening?”

“My job is dreadfully boring, young Uchiha, and my old knees sometimes need to get up from that cramped desk. You look like you’re deep in thought, and if there’s one thing I’ve learned in all my years, the best way to make a choice is to air it out with as many people as possible.”

“I don’t know what I’m at liberty to share,”

“There’s nothing you can say that could embarrass me, and I have few secrets.” Hiruzen offered the pipe to Itachi who politely refused.

“I am being forced to resolve two contradicting forces. They have irreconcilable differences, and I personally don’t agree with either side’s solution. Danzō wants a world without Uchiha, but all my father wants is an Uchiha to serve as Shadow of Fire.”

“And what do you want?” Hiruzen asked.

“I want an end to the entire system which only rewards the most powerful!” Itachi raised his voice.

“Then what is something you can do to help create the world you wish to see?” The wise old man said.

The sun was fully set now, and instead more distant stars hung in the dark. Itachi stared into the dark forest surrounding them. Wind blew leaves into the air, and somewhere a crow was cawing gently. Itachi thanked the ninja known as the Shadow of Fire for his time. “Can I ask you to return to this same spot? In the early evening, just before dusk? I

Walker 17

have my own option I'd like to try out."

Hiruzen enthusiastically agreed.

The next evening Itachi and Lord Sarutobi met again and waited in silence for their guests to arrive. Itachi inspected the painted crow on his Tactical Squad mask as he waited.

First, Danzō appeared among the branches, followed by Itachi. When he saw the two Itachi's he felt off guard. Then Fugaku appeared, also accompanied by Itachi. The second and third embodiments of Itachi dispersed into a murder of crows. The birds sailed on their heavy black wings up into the trees.

A single crow among the many gave a long caw, drawing everyone's attention to its red eyes.

Fugaku opened his mouth to speak, but his son interrupted him. "I brought you all here so we can settle this once and for all."

Danzō turned, as if to leave. "The child thinks we just need to sit at tea and talk it out."

Fugaku looked to his son, "You don't understand the gravity of the situ--"

Itachi stared at his father, his eyes in the form of the red Copy Wheel Eye.

"Contemptuous child! I thought you were supposed to be a genius, but if you thought you could trick us into—" Danzō shouted.

"Don't speak to my son that way," Fugaku commanded.

Danzō spat a cutting insult.

Enraged, Fugaku Uchiha breathed in sharply, then breathed out and shouted, "Great Fireball Techni—" However, the air caught in his throat, and instead of a fireball, the leader of the Uchiha clan spat out first the beak of a black oily crow. With great discomfort, the rest of the bird forced its way out of Fugaku's throat. It fell to the ground with a thud before flying away to join its brethren in the trees.

"It's been an illusion the whole time!" Danzō shouted.

As he said so, the sun was replaced with a white moon and red stained the entire sky. More and more crows flocked to their arboreal balcony and began to caw with force. There were more feathers in the

branches than leaves. The black of their wings seeped down the trunks and into the ground, staining all it touched like oily blood.

“A powerful Illusionary Technique,” Fugaku said, complimenting his son’s skills. “But it changes little. You have seen from Danzō’s own mouth his unwillingness to cooperate. Trapping us here in this hell world of your imagination only complicates the matter.”

Itachi asserted himself, “Both of you told me to do something I did not feel was right. Father, I share your pain for the way our people have been treated, but I don’t have faith in your solution. We cannot simply take over their positions, we must do more to change the world in which we live. Not only that, but Lord Sarutobi is willing to negotiate, he feels for our situation. We could—with a little imagination—settle this conflict without bloodshed.”

“I swore to help all people of the Leaf Village, not just the ones in power.” Lord Sarutobi said.

Itachi turned to Danzō, “And my question for you, is why you’re so set on settling this contradiction with violence? The Uchiha clan has valid concerns, why do you resist their requests for emancipation.”

“I am protecting the village! Everything I do is for the village!” Danzō called agitatedly.

Itachi cut in sharply, “Both of you have been saying that all day. You have been using ‘for the village’ to mean very different things. You use it in the abstract; it holds no material meaning. So, when you say that what do you mean? Do you seek power for the village? Or only for yourself?”

Danzō regained his cool; he smiled slightly as he said, “There is no difference.”

“This illusion has another power, one of Shisui’s creation.” Itachi performed several hand signs. “This technique will show us your plan, Danzō! You are a man of many secrets, we can only hope this technique uncovers the right one.”

Then the mass of birds began to flap their wings. The ensuing gust blew away the cloth and bandages covering Danzō’s left eye and arm. In the eye was a Copy Wheel Eye. On his left shoulder and along his arm there were pockets which appeared similar to eye sockets.

Walker 19

Fugaku recognized instantly, “There are several techniques known to the Copy Wheel Eye to be so powerful that they strip the user of their vision. Certain Uchiha members have been known to slay their best friends or closest family members to gain the use of these powerful tools. Ironical! The only part of us you accept is our most ancient and avaricious taboo! And on what monstrous scale!”

Danzō pulled the cloth back to his shoulder. “Let’s see if Itachi’s illusion can trump even the power of this—” But Danzō too felt his throat clogged by feathers as he tried to channel chakra into his stolen eye.

Hiruzen turned to Fugaku and took off his red Fire Shadow hat. “Fugaku, I think we can see eye to eye here. If nothing else, we have common ground in opposing whatever it is Danzō is attempting to do.” He held out his hand.

Fugaku shook, “We can discuss in detail later, but I think we can settle to a treaty. I will hold you to your words today, as Shadow of Fire.”

When the two men shook hands, another long caw filled the air.

Then they awoke from the illusionary technique. The sky which was in the illusion a menacing red color, was now a blue dusk. The ground was expunged of the bloody oil and left instead with dew settling on green grass. Many crows remained in the trees, thought their numbers had lessened. Or had they?

Danzō stood still, his eyes gazing outward over the Village Hidden in the Leaves.

Fugaku turned to his son, “That was an astounding technique, my son.”

Itachi looked at his father with grey, sightless eyes. Tears flowing down his face he said, “Thank you, father. It’s an altered version of the Moon Reader Technique. Shisui wanted to call it ‘A Night with Crows’. Danzō’s going to be standing there until he agrees to shake hands with you two—in the illusion I mean.”

Fugaku approached Danzō to look under his bandages, but then Danzō’s masked followers appeared in clouds of smoke and leaped into the air to attack. Fugaku performed the hand signs for Great Fire Ball

Walker 20

Technique, but Hiruzen had already summoned his Adamantine Staff.

The staff extended in one direction to press into Fugaku's chest, knocking him off balance. Fugaku's fire ball soared high into the sky, missing the targets. The other end of the staff stretched toward the newcomers. With one heavy swipe, he knocked them to the ground as well.

"There will be no fighting today!" Hiruzen Sarutobi shouted.

When Itachi and Fugaku returned home, Sasuke was waiting eagerly. "Itachi can we go practice that shuriken technique-" But the child stopped when he saw his brother's eyes.

Itachi closed his grey eyes to avoid showing them to his brother. Then he poked Sasuke in the forehead and said, "Sorry Sasuke, maybe later."

I do not own the “Naruto” universe, and only used is as a canvas on which to paint my own ideas.

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for always being there for me.

Third
Edition